

THE
POWER
AND
THE
RIGHT

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IT'S TIME for some clear thinking. Taxation has become the number one issue here at home in the United States. All governments have the power to levy taxes. A few governments have limitations which are built into their constitutions or charters setting forth boundaries beyond which theoretically they cannot go.

In recent years there has come a gradual change in the thinking employed by politicians who hold office. It used to be that politicians recognized that taxation was a fearful power and that it had to be exercised with great caution. In our own country we have even had such men as our first Chief Justice John Marshall who opined that "the power to tax is the power to destroy."

But in recent times, government officials have decided that they have not only the power to tax, but the RIGHT to tax. There's a world of difference between these two words, and the thoughts behind them.

If a government has a power to tax and that power is recognized for what it is, then the government officials will exercise that power with considerable restraint. They will see it in the same light they view other powers which they have; such as the power to kill, the power to confiscate property, the power to make war. Governments have these powers, too. But they do not like to abuse those kinds of powers. They are too dangerous and too deadly.

Conscientious government men are forever studying ways and means of avoiding killing, of avoiding confiscation of property, of avoiding war. And when this nation was young, the men who held office were as conscious of the danger and the deadly results of taxation, as they were of those in any other of their destructive potentialities.

Let us suppose that government officials decided all at once that they not only had the

power to kill, to confiscate and to make war, but that they had a RIGHT to kill, to confiscate and to make war. Do you think this would make any difference in the way they would conduct themselves in office? We do. If a particular man clad with the brief and costly robes of office decided that he had a RIGHT to kill, then he could become more careless of the manner in which he exercised that right. He could begin by killing criminals found guilty of heinous crimes. But he would surely end by killing anyone he felt like killing. If a person opposed an official who thought that he had a RIGHT to kill, he would run a great risk.

Similarly, if an official thought he had a RIGHT to confiscate property or to declare war, would not this conviction on his part tend to make him careless of property rights of others? Would it not tend to make him careless of war?

Now we see the power to tax in its true light. The power to tax is a power but it is NOT a right. Governments have no right to take money from people. They simply have the power, and having it, they are required by all sense of decency, by all proprieties, by all foresight and logic, to exercise that power with great reluctance. They should be chary of any increase in taxes. They should recognize that the RIGHT to have money resides solely in the hands of the persons who earn the money. They should understand that governments exist on the sufferance of the people who permit the government to have what are considered to be reasonable sums, in return for which government attempts to provide protection in certain areas. And if a government is actually dedicated to the task of protecting its citizens, then the government may not with impunity assume that the RIGHT to money has in some mystic manner been transferred from the citizens and put

into the hands of politicians.

This is our problem. From one end of the nation to another, politicians have decided that they have a RIGHT to whatever they can get their hands on.

The politicians in Washington have decided that they have a RIGHT to collect billions for any reason or for no reason at all. They feel that they have a RIGHT to raise gasoline taxes, income taxes, social security taxes, postal taxes, or any kind of taxes whatever.

In our various states, the governors, virtually without exception, now seem to feel that they have the same right. They can take all they can get and getting it is their right, not just a power which they should exercise with great discretion.

So is it also true with county and city governments and with school board governments. These professional people have decided that their RIGHTS include the right of taking whatever they can get their hands on.

They have decided, and their deeds reveal the decision, that no human being has any right to his own money. Thus, the shift in emphasis has occurred, until the average wage earner, businessman or industrialist is now viewed as the sorriest of serfs whose task is simply to earn as much as the government wishes to seize. For the government has the RIGHTS and the powers, and can and will divest each individual of whatever sums the government wants.

It is time this universal practice of plunder was brought to a halt. It is time the politicians learned that they have no right to what is not theirs. It is time that the citizens of America woke up and STOPPED the practice of universal plundering exercised by those in power as though it were a sacred right.